

# **Recreation and Law Enforcement**

To protect the wild character of the PRC, people's activities, their distribution, numbers, and the effects that result must be controlled. This will be accomplished through education, by encouraging recreational pursuits which are in harmony with the special values and natural resources of the PRC, and through regulation and law enforcement.

Law enforcement in the PRC should be a priority. Conservation officers should be required through work plans to regularly patrol the PRC. Other DNR staff should regularly contact users to educate and encourage compliance. PRC visitors will this be motivated to comply with regulation.

The Pigeon River Country cannot be all things to all recreation users. The nature and types of recreational pursuits are ever changing and, therefore, rules, regulations and guidelines governing permitted activities will require continual review and development. Some recreational restrictions are necessary to protect and enhance the goals and objectives of the PRC. The following criteria must be considered when evaluating any new or changing activities, to ensure they do not exceed the Pigeon River Country's recreational carrying capacity or degrade the quality of the PRC.

## **Recreational Use Criteria**

- The activity or use should have low impact, leaving minimal footprint on the PRC.
- The activity should not be detrimental to sustaining wildlife populations.
- The activity should not create noise that interrupts the solitude of the PRC.
- The activity should not concentrate larger groups of people and/or vehicles.
- The activity should not create the likelihood of user conflicts.
- The activity should not lead to more facilities and more infrastructures.
- The activity should not degrade or be inconsistent with the wild character of the PRC.
- The activity should be associated with experiencing the wild character of the PRC.

## **Management Objectives**

### **Wheeled Motorized Vehicles**

State licensed motorized vehicles shall be allowed to travel only on roads as governed by local and state laws. Operation of ORVs within the PRC shall be prohibited. (Use of the existing designated MCCCT trail in the annexed area at the northeast corner of the PRC may continue, pending review of the Vehicle Access Plan.) The DNR reserves the right to use these vehicles outside the above guidelines for management purposes.

### **Snowmobiles**

Snowmobiles shall be allowed only on county and state forest roads identified as open on the Pigeon River Country State Forest Vehicle Access Map, as approved by the Director. Off-road snowmobile use shall be prohibited. No roads or trails shall be used as a designated snowmobile route. The DNR reserves the right to use these vehicles outside the above guidelines for management purposes

### **Camping**

Camping is permitted in the PRC in designated campgrounds, and using a dispersed camp card for dispersed camping is permitted at least one mile from designated state forest campgrounds, unless the area is otherwise closed by a Director's Order. Camping currently is restricted in some areas and it may be in other locations in the future. Camping equipment, such as large camping rigs, generators, entertainment systems, that are in conflict with the recreational use criteria should be further restricted. Continued review of camping regulations will be necessary in order to ensure a shared enjoyable experience, while protecting the values of the PRC.

### **Pathways (non-motorized trails)**

The marked pathways in the PRC should remain in their natural state as much as possible and improvements, such as boardwalks or bridges, should be made only to protect the resource, for public safety and designed to be in keeping with the PRC character. Activities that will have a negative affect on the resource, or the use of others should be prohibited.

### **Canoes, Kayaks, Tubes and Other Watercraft**

Commercial livery use of State lands in the PRC shall be prohibited. Sweeps and woody debris which are necessary to maintain fish habitat and natural conditions shall be managed conservatively. Any clearing of waterways to aid in navigation will be discouraged. Motorized watercraft, except for electric motors, should be prohibited unless necessary for management and enforcement purposes. Activities that will have a negative affect on the resource, or the use of others should be prohibited.

### **Information and Education**

The DNR will provide information about the area, maps of trails and roads, and restrictions which must be observed by PRC users. The Headquarters provides a great opportunity for public interface and should be open to the public as much as possible.

### **Harvesting of Berries, Mushrooms, Nuts, Etc.**

Berry, nut, and mushroom pickers are welcome. Gathering for other than personal use shall be prohibited.

### **Hunting, Trapping and Fishing**

Hunting, trapping and fishing are encouraged. Wildlife, from elk to grouse to trout, as well as the land itself, is one of the most important values in the PRC. Properly regulated hunting, trapping and fishing has no harmful impact on those resources.

### **Parking Areas**

Adequate parking areas have been provided for visitor convenience where they are needed. No further expansion of parking areas should occur except to protect the resource or for public safety.

### **Horseback Riding**

Horseback use shall be restricted to county roads and forest roads identified as open on the Pigeon River Country State Forest vehicle access map; the north spur of the Shore-to-Shore Riding-Hiking Trail; the Elk Hill Equestrian State Forest Campground and Trail Camp; and Johnson's Crossing Trail Camp. All other trails will be closed to horses unless otherwise approved by the Director. Off-Road or off-trail horseback use shall be prohibited.

Horse droppings from non-certified hay users potentially can spread destructive non-native plant species. In keeping with the management objectives of wild character and low impact, the DNR shall monitor resource impacts and user conflict that result from horseback riding. At least every five years the DNR shall determine if changes are necessary to ensure horse usage is not degrading the resource or causing unacceptable user conflicts.

Horse camping shall be restricted to Elk Hill Equestrian State Forest Campground and Trail Camp, and Johnson's Crossing Trail Camp. There will be no expansion of those existing horse campgrounds or the addition of horse campsites unless otherwise approved by the Director. No other horse campgrounds will be designated unless there is a significant new land acquisition, and a new campground is recommended by the DNR Director after consultation with the Advisory Council.

### **Bicycling**

In keeping with the management objectives of wild character and low impact, the DNR shall monitor resource impacts and user conflict that could result from bicycling. Bicycles will be restricted to county roads, forest roads identified as open on the Pigeon River Country State Forest vehicle access map, and the High Country Pathway. All other trails will be closed to bicycles unless otherwise approved by the Director. Off-road or off-trail biking shall be prohibited. At least every five years the DNR shall determine if changes are necessary to ensure bicycling is not degrading the resource or causing unacceptable user conflicts.

### **Commercial Use and Events**

The guidelines established in this Concept call for conservative stewardship and management of uses that threaten the unique and wild character of the PRC. All Use and Event Permit applications should be evaluated in a manner consistent with DNR Procedure 26.04-04 and according to the recreational use criteria recommended in this document. As provided for in DNR Procedure 26.04-04, special criteria will be developed for the PRC which will be applied to all Use and Event Permit applications. The Advisory Council will review the special criteria. If there are reasonable alternatives to conduct the activity outside of the PRC, applicants should be encouraged to look elsewhere.

### **Wildlife Viewing**

Viewing opportunities abound in the PRC and are in harmony with the wild character when done with knowledge and respect for the wildlife being observed as well as for other wildlife viewers. Large groups and overuse of certain areas at certain times of the year disturb wildlife and compromise the very opportunities that people seek. Management and user education about wildlife viewing are critical and required to ensure a continuing and rewarding experience.

### **Special Management Areas**

There are certain areas within the PRC that have special rules, including Green Timbers and Blue Lakes. Some recreation activities are prohibited and/or controlled in these special management areas. These rules should be maintained. Other special management areas may be created to protect or enhance certain attributes.

The DNR shall assess the current status of regulations that affect recreation within the PRC, and work to develop regulations and orders to fully implement the provisions of the Recreation Management Objectives.